



# *The King's Ransom*

Matthew 20:28

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Text

Matthew 21:1-17

Topic

Jesus makes His triumphal entry into Jerusalem  
as King riding on a donkey

Title

*"Donkey King"*

Introduction

I appreciate [snopes.com](http://snopes.com). If you've never heard of it, it's a website that investigates urban legends, internet rumors, e-mail forwards, and other stories of unknown or questionable origin.

Before you hit "Post" on Facebook, you might want to check-out whether or not, for example, Pope Francis commissioned J.K. Rowlings, author of the *Harry Potter* series, to rewrite the New Testament and make it more appealing to a younger generation.

He didn't; but that didn't stop it from being spread on the internet.

I ended up at [snopes.com](http://snopes.com) this week because I was researching the so-called prophecies of Nostradamus. It's said, for example, that he accurately predicted the 9-11 attacks on the World Trade Center in New York.

Here is what the folks at snopes say:

Nostradamus did not write the quatrain that was widely attributed to him in the wake of the 9-11 attacks. (One wonders how a guy who died in 1566 could have written an item identified as being penned in 1654 anyway.) It originated with a student at Brock University in Canada in 1997, appearing in a web-published essay on Nostradamus. That particular quatrain was offered by the page's author, Neil Marshall, as a fabricated example to illustrate how easily an important-sounding prophecy could be crafted through the use of abstract imagery.

People mistook what this guy wrote as an example to be an actual, and accurate, prophecy. It wasn't.

Not so with bible prophecy. Bible prophecies are specific and detailed. Fulfillment of bible prophecies are usually obvious and are always 100% accurate.

In an article comparing Nostradamus' so-called prophecies to Bible prophecy, apologist and theologian Dr. Norman Geisler concluded,

There is no real comparison between Nostradamus' predictions and those of the Bible. His are vague, fallible, and occult. Those of the Bible are clear, infallible, and divine. The Bible made numerous clear and distinct predictions hundreds of years in advance. Nostradamus did not.

There is no evidence that Nostradamus was a prophet at all; certainly he was like none in the Bible. Biblical prophecy stands unique in its claim to be supernatural.

Our text in Matthew presents a remarkable, 100% accurate, fulfillment of prophecy. Five centuries before Jesus Christ was born, Daniel predicted the exact day He would make His triumphal entry into Jerusalem. It's part of the famous Prophecy of the 70 Weeks.

Around the same time Daniel was written, the prophet Zechariah predicted exactly how the Messiah would enter Jerusalem.

Both the *day*, and the *way*, Jesus would make His triumphal entry into Jerusalem were perfectly predicted centuries before they occurred.

Jesus fulfilled not just these two prophecies, but as many as three hundred fifty-two.

The odds of one man doing that are incredible. I'll offer some numerical perspective a little later. It's mathematical, and therefore scientific, proof of what we believe.

The Bible is the Word of God, and Jesus is the Son of God, the God-Man, sent from Heaven to earth to save the human race.

As we enter Jerusalem with Jesus via these incredible verses in the Gospel of Matthew, we can ask two questions suggested by the text: #1 Do You Fear The Lord Who Fulfills Prophecy?, and #2 Do You Hear The Lord Who Solicits Your Participation?

## #1 Do You Fear The Lord Who Fulfills Prophecy?

One thing that immediately strikes you about chapter twenty-one is a major change in Jesus regarding public recognition of Who He was. After avoiding every effort by followers to promote Him as King, and often withdrawing from crowds, Jesus takes the lead in orchestrating His entry into Jerusalem on what we now know was His final visit to the city before His crucifixion.

Mat 21:1 Now when they drew near Jerusalem, and came to Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, Mat 21:2 saying to them, "Go into the village opposite you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Loose them and bring them to Me.

Mat 21:3 And if anyone says anything to you, you shall say, 'The Lord has need of them,' and immediately he will send them."

Mat 21:4 All this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying:

Mat 21:5 "TELL THE DAUGHTER OF ZION, 'BEHOLD, YOUR KING IS COMING TO YOU, LOWLY, AND SITTING ON A DONKEY, A COLT, THE FOAL OF A DONKEY.' "

We're going to return to these verses, and talk about the response of the disciples, when we ask our second question. For now, we are concentrating on the fulfillment of prophecy.

The specific prophecy - and please note that it is **very** specific - is found in the Book of Zechariah, in chapter nine and verse nine. It was spoken, and written down, somewhere between 520-518BC.

If that's not remarkable enough, Daniel predicted the specific day Jesus would enter Jerusalem.

Daniel, originally deported to Babylon as a teenager, was reading in the Book of Jeremiah. He understood that the seventy years of captivity God had ordered for Israel were almost over and he began to pray for his people.

The angel Gabriel interrupted Daniel's prayer and gave him a four-verse prophecy that is unquestionably the most remarkable passage in the entire Bible: Daniel 9:24-27.

It would take a while to go over the entire prophecy. Let me just say this. Daniel was told, by Gabriel,

Dan 9:25 "Know therefore and understand, That from the going forth of the command To restore and build Jerusalem Until Messiah the Prince, There shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; The street shall be built again, and the wall, Even in troublesome times.

This is a mathematical prophecy. Daniel was made aware of a specific period of time, consisting of what the angel called "seven weeks and sixty-two weeks," totaling sixty-nine weeks. These are weeks of years - seven-year periods of time.

The Jewish (and Babylonian) calendars used a 360-day year. Sixty-nine "weeks" of 360-day years totals 173,880 days.

In effect, Gabriel told Daniel that the interval between the commandment to rebuild Jerusalem until the presentation of the Messiah as King would be 173,880 days.

The commandment to restore and build Jerusalem was given by Artaxerxes on a date known to historians: March 14, 445BC.

**Exactly 173,880 days after the decree, Jesus - Who had previously avoided recognition - actively arranged to enter Jerusalem as its King, riding on the proper animal.**

Mat 21:6 So the disciples went and did as Jesus commanded them.

Mat 21:7 They brought the donkey and the colt, laid their clothes on them, and set Him on them.

Mat 21:8 And a very great multitude spread their clothes on the road; others cut down branches from the trees and spread them on the road.

Mat 21:9 Then the multitudes who went before and those who followed cried out, saying: "Hosanna to the Son of David!  
'BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD!  
Hosanna in the highest!"

"Hosanna" means something like *save now*. "Son of David" is the title of the Jewish Messiah, who must be legally descended from David, in David's line, in order to be the King.

I think it was Charles Spurgeon who noticed that clothing and leaves tie in to the Garden of Eden - where, because of their choice to disobey God, Adam and Eve needed to cloth themselves with leaves. That was being trampled on by Jesus - the victor over Satan, sin and death.

Mat 21:10 And when He had come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, "Who is this?"

Mat 21:11 So the multitudes said, "This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth of Galilee."

It was Sunday, the first day of the week, and Jerusalem was swelled with pilgrims who had come to celebrate Passover.

Estimates of the crowds during Passover are all over the place:

- One source claims a quarter of a million lambs were slain during Passover. Since one lamb was required for every ten Jews, the estimate is that 2.5mil Jews were in the city. Seems too high to me.
- Another source puts the Jewish population of Jerusalem at 30,000 and says there were 125,000 pilgrims. It seems more realistic.

We can't really tell too much from the crowd's description of Jesus as "the prophet from Nazareth of Galilee." Were they missing the mark by calling Him a prophet?

Or did they mean to indicate He was "**the** prophet," spoken of in Deuteronomy by Moses - their Messiah? (Deuteronomy 18:15).

The mention of "Nazareth" and "Galilee" was probably made by folks from that region, who were traveling to Jerusalem and were expressing a kind of local pride in Jesus.

He may have had no respect in Nazareth from His own neighbors before, but now that He looked to be the Messiah, all that changed.

Of course, as is always pointed out, that same multitude would, in just a few days, shout out, "Crucify Him!"

Mat 21:12 Then Jesus went into the temple of God and drove out all those who bought and sold in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves.

Mat 21:13 And He said to them, "It is written, 'MY HOUSE SHALL BE CALLED A HOUSE OF PRAYER,' but you have made it a 'DEN OF THIEVES.'"

The pilgrims coming to sacrifice at Passover had to exchange their money for Temple currency. The money changers were allowed charge exorbitant rates, and kick back a portion to the high priest; it was what we'd call a racket.

Not only that: if you brought your own animal to sacrifice, the priests would find something wrong with it, forcing you to purchase one of their 'pre-approved' animals - but, again, at an outrageous price.

Not only that: this was taking place in the Court of the Gentiles, which was intended to give non-Jews and outcasts the opportunity to approach the God of Israel for mercy and salvation. Instead they saw corruption.

"My house" is a claim of deity. "House of prayer" is from Isaiah 56:7; "den of thieves" is from Jeremiah 7:11.

The Gospel of John records Jesus doing this at the beginning of His three and one half year ministry. He does it again here at the end.

I hate to draw encouragement from negative results, but the overturning of their tables didn't have any lasting effect.

Sometimes you can do all the right things ministering for The Lord but not get godly results. God has determined to allow men and women to exercise real free will.



Mat 21:14 Then the blind and the lame came to Him in the temple, and He healed them.

That's a better use for the Temple, is it not? Jesus cleared out the secular and got down to the spiritual.

Whatever The Lord has given us, we want to dedicate it to providing spiritual help for folks who have need. We can't get so wrapped-up in things that we overlook people.

Mat 21:15 But when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that He did, and the children crying out in the temple and saying, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" they were indignant

Mat 21:16 and said to Him, "Do You hear what these are saying?" And Jesus said to them, "Yes. Have you never read, 'OUT OF THE MOUTH OF BABES AND NURSING INFANTS YOU HAVE PERFECTED PRAISE'?"

"Have you never read" would sting, because these guys had read Psalm eight, had it memorized, but they didn't understand it.

I all the time hear about people who "really know the Bible," but aren't believers. People tend to be afraid of them - of their supposed intellect.

"Have they never read" that all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God? That there is no one righteous - not even one?

Did they forget to underline, in the Bible they supposedly know so well, that the wages of sin is death?

I'm happy to be a "babe" or a "nursing infant" in their estimation - so long as I'm saved and, therefore, I am praising God.

Mat 21:17 Then He left them and went out of the city to Bethany, and He lodged there.

The Lord was probably staying with Mary, Martha and Lazarus - who He had recently risen from the dead.

Let's talk prophecy as proof of the Bible. Professor Emeritus of Science at Westmont College, Peter Stoner, calculated the probability of one man fulfilling the major prophecies made concerning the Messiah. The estimates were worked out by twelve different classes, involving more than six hundred college students.

After examining only eight different prophecies, they conservatively estimated that the chance of one man fulfilling all eight prophecies was one in 10 to the 17th power. That's 10 with seventeen zeros.

To illustrate how large the number is, Stoner gave this illustration. Imagine covering the entire state of Texas with silver dollars to a level of two feet deep. The total number of silver dollars needed to cover the whole state would be 10 to the 17th power. Now, choose just one of those silver dollars, mark it and drop it from an airplane. Then thoroughly stir all the silver dollars all over the state.

When that has been done, blindfold one man, and tell him he can travel wherever he wishes in the state of Texas. But some time he must stop, reach down into the two feet of silver dollars and try to pull up that one specific silver dollar that has been marked.

Now, the chance of his finding that one silver dollar in the state of Texas would be the chance the prophets had for eight of their prophecies coming true in any one man in the future.

But, of course, there are many more than eight prophecies. In another calculation Stoner used forty-eight prophecies (even though he could have used a higher number) and arrived at the extremely conservative estimate that the probability of forty-eight prophecies being fulfilled in one person is one in 10 to the 157th power.

As we tell you weekly in our series of prophecy updates, upwards of 75% of the Bible's 2500 prophecies have already been literally fulfilled.

The remaining 25% - the prophecies of the last days - will most certainly be literally fulfilled.

The numbers boggle the mind. But do they touch your heart?

The fulfillment of prophecy - both in the past, but especially in the future, ought to cause you to fear The Lord.

- If you're a believer, you fear Him, anxious to obey, knowing that history is moving towards its inevitable consummation, but, more particularly, that, in your life, all things are working together for the good.
- If you're not a believer... The future is bleak. Imminently, The Lord will return to resurrect and rapture believers, but you'll be left behind to navigate the Great Tribulation - when the vast majority of people on the earth will die violent deaths.

## #2 Do You Hear The Lord Who Solicits Your Participation?

In the midst of the fulfillment of Bible prophecy are the choices of Jesus' disciples.

If you want to highlight, or underline, or memorize, a verse from this passage, I'd suggest verse six:

Mat 21:6 So the disciples went and did as Jesus commanded them.

If you were going to end each day with a Twitter-summary of your activities, that would be a great 53-character tweet.

Had Jesus made prearrangements for this particular donkey? Unlikely. You couldn't go on-line, or via telephone, and reserve a donkey for the day. There was no Budget Donkey Rental, at \$19.95 a day and 10¢ a mile.

This was no easy task. It involved faith and also risk. Now we don't encourage steps of faith that are totally void of the Lord's leading. For example there was a lady in town many years ago who would be 'led,' so she said, to write you a check to help you if you were struggling.

Trouble was, the checks she wrote were faith-checks - meaning she rarely had any money to cover them. Her defense was that, if God led her to write you a check, it was up to Him to deposit money in her account to cover it.

At the same time, it's not faith unless there is some trust required, some element of the unknown.

Mat 21:2 ... "Go into the village opposite you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Loose them and bring them to Me.

Mat 21:3 And if anyone says anything to you, you shall say, 'The Lord has need of them,' and immediately he will send them."

Were there no donkeys right where they were that had never been ridden? I wonder what they did to donkey thieves in those days.

In the Gospel of Mark, you read about the reaction of the crowd at the time of their loosing of the donkeys:

Mar 11:4 So they went their way, and found the colt tied by the door outside on the street, and they loosed it.

Mar 11:5 But some of those who stood there said to them, "What are you doing, loosing the colt?"

Mar 11:6 And they spoke to them just as Jesus had commanded. So they let them go.

I just saw a viral video the other day about a crowd of good Samaritans who stopped a car-jacking by beating-up the would be thief. This was a serious assignment.

What was so special about this particular donkey?

What was so special about it was that The Lord gave His disciples an opportunity to participate in His ministry.

- There could have been a donkey in closer proximity.
- Jesus could have told them to ask around, to get permission first, to borrow a donkey.

- He could have had the donkey and her colt miraculously wander from the opposite village right up to where they were assembling for their trip into Jerusalem.

None of those solutions would have partnered the disciples with Him as He forwarded the kingdom.

Jesus encourages you to partner with Him by giving you opportunities to participate in the ministry. You must walk by faith - taking the risks, trusting in Him to cover you.

Let's talk about the owner of these donkeys for a minute. He, too, was assuming risk. As far as the text is concerned, there was no plan for returning these donkeys. Was he expected to make the trip with them? Or just count it as a loss?

These beasts were sources of income, or at the very least they were help with everyday tasks. Even today we buy beasts of burden for poor believers in India through Gospel for Asia.

It's all fun and games until it's your donkeys The Lord has need of; or until it's you who is assigned to go and untie the donkeys.

Another phrase in this passage that should cause us to wonder: "The Lord has need of them."

The sovereign creator of the universe "has need" of two donkeys. I'm not going to go deep into the mystery of it all, but this puts us on notice that the sovereign God of the universe has created a world in which men and women have genuine free-will choices.

I'll let theologian Jerry White express it:

God has chosen to create people who are free and to accomplish His purposes through their undetermined choices. [Our] perfectly good and wise God [exercises] just the amount of control appropriate for the sort of world He chose to create.

God's providence sees to it that His plan for history marches forward, right on schedule. Along the way, He invites you to choose whether or not you will participate with Him; whether or not you'll take the ride with Him, so to speak.

Your choices are not meticulously determined; you are free to choose.

- The disciples sent to get the donkeys could have refused.
- They could have chickened-out on the way.
- They could have stopped losing the donkeys when questioned by the crowd.

If they had, The Lord would have provided donkeys some other way. But He wanted them to be a part of His big day.

The Lord has a big day planned for each of us. It's the day we are with Him, face-to-face and He looks upon us to reward us for our faithful service.

Hence the question we are here to answer: What is The Lord asking me to do? What risk of faith has He set before me, or will He set before me as I seek Him?

Each of us has donkeys to loose - **today** - as we are blessed to participate in the work of the Gospel.

